

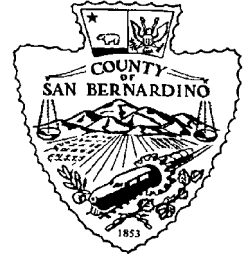
Department of Veterans Affairs

Office Locations:

175 W. Fifth Street, Second Floor, San Bernardino, CA 92415-0470 (909) 387-5516

13260 Central Avenue, Second Floor, Chino, CA 91710-4165 (909) 465-5241

12370 Hesperia Road, Suite 12, Victorville, CA 92392-4787 (760) 843-2790



Former Prisoners of War

Background

Former American POWs are eligible for special veterans' benefits, including medical care in VA hospitals, and disability compensation for injuries and disease presumed to be caused by internment. These benefits are in addition to regular benefits and services to which they, as veterans, are entitled.

Less than half (41 percent) of the Americans held prisoner in the last six conflicts are now living. Some 142,256 Americans were captured and interned during World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam Conflict, the Persian Gulf War, and the Somalia Conflict. This includes 81 women seized on Guam or in the Philippines in World War II, and two in the Persian Gulf War.

Of that total, an estimated 58,832 were living as of January 1, 1997, according to Charles A. Stenger of the American Ex-Prisoners of War Association. This includes 20 from World War I, 55,296 from World War II, 2,932 from the Korean Conflict, 550 from the Vietnam Conflict, 23 from the Persian Gulf War, and one from the Somalia Conflict.

American Prisoners Of War

	TOTAL	WWI	WWII	KOREA	VIETNAM	PERSIAN GULF	SOMALIA
Captured & Interned	142,257	4,120	130,201	7,140	772	23	1
Returned to U.S. Military Control	125,202	3,973	116,129	4,418	658	23	1
Refused Repatriation	21	0	0	21	0	0	0
Died while POW	17,034	147	14,072	2,701	144	0	0
Alive, Jan. 1997	58,832	30	55,296	2,932	550	23	1

Congress defines a former prisoner of war as a person who, while serving on active military, naval or air service, was forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by an enemy government or a hostile force, during a period of war or in situations comparable to war.

Compensation

Studies have shown that the physical deprivation and psychological stress endured as a captive have life-long effects on subsequent health and on social and vocational adjustment. These studies also indicate vulnerability to psychological stress is increased.

The laws on former POW benefits recognize that military medical records do not cover periods of incarceration. A former POW is eligible for disability compensation on a presumptive basis if any of the following disabilities are found at any time after service at a compensable level (at least 10 percent disabling): vitamin deficiency diseases such as beriberi and pellagra, chronic dysentery, helminthiasis, malnutrition, miscellaneous nutritional deficiencies, residuals of frostbite, post-traumatic osteoarthritis, psychosis, any of the anxiety states, dysthymic disorder, peripheral neuropathy, irritable bowel syndrome, peptic ulcer disease, or ischemic heart disease (if there was localized edema during captivity).

For POWs detained or interned for 30 days or more, it will be presumed that the disability was incurred in or aggravated during military service, unless there is evidence of some other cause.

Compensation is paid based on the degree of disability. Veterans rated 30 percent or more disabled qualify for dependency allowance. Dependents of those rated 100 percent disabled may qualify for educational assistance. Spouses of veterans rated 100 percent disabled for 10 years prior to death and spouses of veterans who die as the result of service-connected disabilities are eligible for dependency and indemnity compensation.

As of January 2, 1997, a total of 39,147 veterans were receiving VA compensation or pension benefits for 125,806 conditions related to their service and incarceration as a POW.

Medical Care

Former POWs are not subject to VA's eligibility assessment and will be provided hospital care. VA may provide outpatient care without limitation to former POWs. POWs held for more than 90 days are eligible for any needed dental treatment. Those held for less than 90 days are eligible for dental treatment for service-connected, noncompensable dental conditions.

How Do I Get Help Or More Information?

Veterans Service Representatives are available to discuss this or any veterans' issue with you. Veterans Service Representatives are available to discuss claims or any veterans' issues with you. Call your closest office for the nearest location to you:

Monday through Thursday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Victorville: (760) 843-2790 San Bernardino: (909) 387-5516 Chino: (909) 465-5241

Part time offices in: Barstow, Yucca Valley and 29 Palms.